

GOD

Claiming God's Peace

One of the great blessings that we as children of God in today's Grace Administration can enjoy is peace in our lives. This peace is not "world peace", which we know will never be available in our day and time no matter what people say and do. Instead, it is a peace that only God can provide.

E. W. Bullinger's *Critical Lexicon and Concordance* defines peace as "rest, in contrast to strife...a state of untroubled, undisturbed well-being." The only true peace is that which comes from God. We can claim God's peace no matter what the worldly circumstances. As we do, our minds can be at rest and in a state of untroubled, undisturbed well-being no matter what's happening around us and no matter what attacks the adversary may be throwing at us.

In the Bible, the Hebrew word for peace used in the Old Testament is *shalom*, meaning peace or completeness. The corresponding Greek word used in the Gospels and New Testament is *eirēnē*. We'll take a look at a few of the usages of these two words in God's Word to get a better appreciation of what this peace is that is available for us to claim.

First, let's take a look at a familiar verse, Isaiah 26:3:

Isaiah

26:3 Thou wilt keep *him* in perfect peace, whose mind *is* stayed *on thee*: because he trusteth in thee.

The words "perfect peace" in the Hebrew are actually a repetition of the word *shalom*, reading "peace, peace." This is a figure of speech called epizeuxis, or repetition, in which a word is repeated for emphasis. By repeating the word "peace," the emphasis is on that peace. This is also an example of the figure of speech antimetabole, the use of a noun repeated in place of an adjective, in order to express the adjective in the highest degree. God used two figures of speech to call our attention to this peace, which can be understood as "great peace" or, as stated in the King James Version, "perfect peace". Peace doesn't get any better than that!

Who gets this perfect peace? In the King James Version, it says "whose mind *is* stayed *on thee*: because he trusteth in thee." Notice that the first words "on thee" are in italics: they were added and are not in the text. If you leave out these added words, and ignore the punctuation (which also was not in the text), this verse reads: "Thou wilt keep *him* in perfect peace whose mind is stayed because he trusteth in thee." Indeed, in the New International Version, this verse reads: "You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you." The New American Standard version renders this verse: "The steadfast of mind you will keep in perfect peace, because he trusts in you."

So, this verse is telling us that this "perfect peace" is available to one whose mind is "stayed," or as the NIV and NAS say, "steadfast". The word "stayed" is from a Hebrew word that is also translated "to be established".

To have a stayed mind, one that is established or steadfast, is to have your mind focused, committed to God, allowing nothing to distract you from this mindset. We'll return to this verse, but let's take a quick look at Chapter 50, verse 7:

50:7 For the Lord God will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed.

To "set one's face like a flint" is a figure of speech indicating that one's mind is established, stayed. Only then can we know that we will not be "confounded" (confused, perplexed, or ashamed); only then can we have that perfect peace. Let's return to 26:3:

26:3 Thou wilt keep *him* in perfect peace, whose mind *is* stayed *on thee*: because he trusteth in thee.

When we trust in God, our minds can be stayed, established, and we can have perfect peace. God wants us to trust in Him. We see this in the next verse:

26:4 Trust ye in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord Jehovah *is* everlasting strength:

The word "trust" in these verses can also be understood as "confide". As we confide in God, we can be secure and without fear. Then, we can have that perfect peace.

Let's look at a few other Old Testament usages of the word "peace" to gain a greater understanding of this peace available from God as we stay our minds:

Psalms

4:8 I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety.

The word "safety" here is from a Hebrew word for "confidence" or "trust". When we have confidence or trust in God, we can have peace, and we can enjoy restful sleep.

Psalms

29:11 The Lord will give strength unto His people; the Lord will bless his people with peace.

"Peace" here can be understood as "the peace", referring to the peace only available from God. As God's people are blessed with His peace, they can be strong.

Psalms

37:11 But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.

Those who are meek to God's Word can enjoy an abundance of God's peace.

37:37 Mark the perfect *man*, and behold the upright: for the end of *that* man *is* peace.

Also, we see this peace available to those who endeavor to live by God's Word in Psalm 119:165:

119:165 Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them (*nothing shall cause them to stumble*).

In this verse, the word "peace" is the figure of speech synecdochē, in which the word "peace" is used for every blessing we can enjoy that is connected with peace. You may recall that Ephesians 1:3 tells us that God has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ. We then definitely can have God's peace.

In Old Testament usages, peace is associated with righteousness. Only when one strived for righteousness by endeavoring to live and do God's Word could one truly experience this peace. We see this in Isaiah 32:17:

Isaiah

32:17 And the work (*tillage*) of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.

To have peace is to have quietness and confidence, so the repetition of the word "righteousness" here establishes that this peace would be a result of a person's being righteous.

In Old Testament times, a person needed to strive to keep the Old Testament Law to be reckoned as righteous, and we know that Jesus Christ was the only one who was able to perfectly fulfill that Law. His accomplishments made God's perfect peace readily available, as we see in the Gospel of John chapter 14, verse 27:

John

14:27 Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

Jesus Christ referred to the peace he made available as "my peace". Isaiah 9:6 refers to the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ, as "the Prince of Peace", a figure of speech for "the Prince who gives peace". This peace, made available by the accomplishments of Jesus Christ, is not any kind of "peace" from the world, but is the perfect peace of God.

Look at Chapter 16, verse 33:

John

16:33 These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome (*conquered*) the world.

There is no true peace from the world, from people who live according to the realm of the senses. True peace was made available by the accomplishments of Jesus Christ.

So, we see that Jesus Christ came to make true peace, God's perfect peace, available. We see this peace referred to in the Church Epistles, written to us in today's Administration of Grace. Look at Romans, Chapter 2:

Romans

- 2:10 But glory, honor, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew (*Judean*) first, and also to the Greek (*Gentile*);
2:11 For there is no respect of persons (*partiality*) with God.

Peace is available to us once we are born again of God's spirit.

Romans

- 5:1 Therefore being justified by faith (*believing*), we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:
5:2 By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

We have peace with God because once we were born again, we were reconciled to God and are no longer at enmity with Him. We are now righteous in His sight. We can now benefit from that perfect peace that God made available.

Romans

- 8:6 For to be carnally minded *is* death; but to be spiritually minded *is* life and peace.

We can enjoy peace when we are "spiritually minded" – when we put God's Word in our minds and act accordingly. As we do this, we are renewing our minds to God's Word. Romans 12:2 tells us "be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." Rather than being "conformed to the world", living according to the senses realm where no true peace is available, we renew our minds and enjoy God's true peace.

Romans

- 14:17 For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost (*in holy spirit*).

Matthew 6:33 says "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." So, the true peace from God is available as we "seek the Kingdom of God". We keep our thoughts on God's Word, and trust in Him to take care of us. You might recall that in Matthew Chapter 6 Jesus Christ admonished his listeners to "take no thought" for such necessities as food and clothing. The words "take thought" are from the Greek word *merimnaō*, which can be better understood as having anxiety or undue concern. Jesus was stating that God knows what we need, so rather than having undue concern or anxiety about getting things, we should "seek first the kingdom of God", and we saw in Romans 14:17 that then we can have peace.

This brings us to the question: How can we, in our day and time, “seek first the kingdom of God” so we can claim that perfect peace that God by His grace made available through the accomplishments of Jesus Christ? We see the answer in Philippians, Chapter 4:

Philippians

4:6 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

The word “careful” is from the same Greek word that was rendered “take thought” in Matthew Chapter 6, and can best be understood here as “anxious”. We are not to be anxious about anything. Instead of being anxious, we go to God, our loving heavenly Father. This verse contains three words related to prayer that show us how to do this.

Prayer, from the Greek word *proseuchē*, according to the *Companion Bible* refers to prayer offered to God, having regard to the power of Him who is invoked and giving prominence to personal devotion. We go to God, recognizing His great power as the almighty God and His ability to do. Supplication, from the word *deēsis*, refers to a petition for a special object, having regard to our necessity rather than God’s sufficiency to supply it, giving prominence to personal need. We have a need, so we go to God to get that need met.

We pray to God and make our petition to get our need met with thanksgiving, making our requests known to Him. The word “requests” in this verse is *aitēma*, referring to a specific petition for a particular thing. We see this word *aitēma* in I John Chapter 5, verses 14 and 15: “And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.” In those verses, the word “petitions” is from the same word translated “requests” in Philippians 4:6. We have confidence (boldness in the text), because we know that God hears us and will grant our petitions.

We make our requests known to God by prayer and supplication, knowing that He will supply our need (Philippians 4:19). When we do this, we won’t be anxious about anything. Then, we can have that perfect peace, as we see in verse 7:

4:7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through (*in*) Christ Jesus.

The words “peace of God” are a figure of speech (Genitive of Possession), emphasizing that God is the source of this peace. You can read it: “the peace which comes from God”. Bullinger’s book *Figures of Speech used in the Bible* describes this “peace of God” as “God’s peace; the peace which reigns in His presence, where the end is known from the beginning, producing a peace which nothing can therefore disturb”. Since God is all-knowing, nothing can surprise or disturb Him, so His peace is perfect. Bullinger continues by explaining: “It is the unknown future which disturbs our peace; but if our requests are made known to God, we need not be full of care about anything; and something of God’s peace will keep and guard our hearts and minds.” Verse 7 tells us that this “perfect peace of God” is beyond all human comprehension.

As we go to God in prayer and give our cares to Him, we are not anxious and can then focus on putting God's Word on in our minds and acting accordingly. We see what things to dwell on and the great benefit that results in the next two verses:

4:8 Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things *are* honest, whatsoever things *are* just, whatsoever things *are* pure, whatsoever things *are* lovely, whatsoever things *are* of good report; if *there be* any virtue, and if *there be* any praise, think on these things.

Here we see a list of eight things (Biblically, 8 is the number for new beginning) we are to dwell on: each one of these refers to an aspect of God's Word.

4:9 Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.

As we keep God's Word in our minds and act accordingly, we enjoy the great peace of God. The phrase "God of peace" is another figure of speech, this time the Genitive of Origin, emphasizing God as the one who is the source of peace: "the God who has made peace and gives peace". And God, our source of this peace, is "with" us. The word "with" here is from a Greek word meaning "in company with" or "in companionship with". God is our loving heavenly Father who has a personal relationship with us, His children, as our supply of peace.

So, we can claim the perfect peace that only God can make available. No matter what our needs, and no matter what the circumstances, we can go to our heavenly Father, make our requests known to Him, and then, as we dwell on and act on His word rather than allowing any anxiety, we can claim and enjoy that perfect peace. Galatians 5:22 tells us that peace is one of the fruit of the spirit.

Let's conclude by looking at Colossians Chapter 3, verse 15, which admonishes us what to do with this perfect peace that we can claim:

Colossians

3:15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body: and be ye thankful.

In six of the seven Critical Greek Manuscripts, this verse reads "the peace of Christ", referring to God's perfect peace made available by the accomplishments of Jesus Christ. Once we claim God's perfect peace, we are to let it "rule", or "preside" or "umpire" in our hearts, the seat of our personal life. As this peace rules in our hearts and lives, it impacts the Body of Christ, strengthening the household in which we belong.

We have seen that, through the accomplishments of Jesus Christ, God's perfect peace is available to us. We just need to claim it.

- Dr. Rick Batt